

to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes:

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise today unfortunately with the news that the Rules Committee rejected several major Democratic amendments that could have greatly strengthened the National Defense Authorization Act. It is sad to see that so many relevant and necessary amendments to this Defense Authorization were not ruled in order. Among the most relevant amendment were those submitted by my distinguished colleagues including Mr. WAXMAN's amendment on government contracting, Mr. SKELTON's amendment on women in combat, Mr. TIERNEY's amendment on the Truman Commission, Mr. MARKEY's amendment on torture, Mr. SALAZAR's amendment on Survivors Benefit Plans, Mr. TAYLOR's amendment on TRICARE, Mr. MARSHALL's amendment on concurrent receipt and Mr. SPRATT's amendment on nonproliferation. It is truly unfortunate that such pertinent amendments were not ruled in order and debated by this entire body. When the amendment process is compromised like it has been here then the legislative process suffers and unfortunately that means our Armed Forces will suffer as a result of this Defense Authorization.

I am most outraged by the fact that there will be no consideration of the Taylor amendment on TRICARE for reservists, the Salazar amendment on ending the Military Families Tax, and the Marshall amendment on ending the Disabled Veterans Tax. These amendments are three key provisions in the GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century, which House Democrats unveiled in March. It seems blatant, that the Rules Committee would not allow the full body to consider these vital amendments which could have greatly strengthened this Defense Authorization.

My colleague Mr. TAYLOR's amendment would have provided full TRICARE to all members of the Guard and Reserve and their families. Currently, the Guard and Reserve are covered by TRICARE only when they are mobilized for active duty. Under the Taylor amendment, all members of the Guard and Reserve could buy into TRICARE for an affordable monthly premium. The Taylor amendment was in fact adopted by the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 32 to 30. However, after the mark-up, Chairman HUNTER stripped the amendment from the bill based on a violation of the Budget Act, instead of allowing Representative TAYLOR to make a slight modification to his amendment which would have addressed the violation. It is the slightly modified version that Representative TAYLOR had sought the Rules Committee to make in order and which the Rules Committee has egregiously rejected for consideration. It is a travesty indeed because this amendment could have done so much good for so many Guardsmen and Reservists. The simple fact is that more than 433,000 of our National Guard and Reserves have been called up over the past two and one-half years. Reserve Components make up almost 50 percent of our forces in Iraq. It is time that we as a body recognize their service to our Nation by providing TRICARE for Reserve Component personnel on a permanent basis. It is disgraceful that this Congress will not demonstrate the level of commitment for its citizen-soldiers that they so richly deserve.

I am also greatly disturbed by the fact that there will be no consideration of Mr. SPRATT's

amendment on nuclear nonproliferation. The amendment offered by Mr. SPRATT would have provided an additional \$80 million for nuclear nonproliferation activities. These vital activities would have been paid for by a modest decrease to future silo construction of ground-based missile defense. Clearly, this Administration and this Congress would rather waste money on futile missile defense systems that have proven not to work instead of safeguarding against the proliferation of nuclear weapons which pose a threat to our entire Nation and indeed the world. I can not even fathom how so many officials elected by the people can have such misplaced priorities. I can only pray that clearer judgment will prevail one day soon before we have to face the consequences of these misplaced priorities.

Mr. SALAZAR's amendment would have ended the Military Families Tax. Currently, the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) penalizes survivors, mostly widows of those killed as a result of combat. These widows lose their survivor benefits if they receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits because their spouse has died of a service-connected injury. The Salazar amendment would have ended this offset requirement—the Military Families Tax—for the 53,000 spouses who continue to pay this unfair tax, which affects families that have made the greatest sacrifice for our country. Again, I find it disgraceful that this Congress will not have the opportunity to aid those military families that are penalized under the Military Families Tax and who have made the ultimate sacrifice to our Nation.

Mr. MARSHALL's amendment would have completely ended the Disabled Veterans' Tax for about 400,000 military retirees who were left behind under the partial repeal which the GOP-controlled Congress reluctantly enacted in 2003 and would speed up the end of the Disabled Veterans' Tax for the remaining disabled military retirees. For almost two years Democrats have been working to end the Disabled Veterans' Tax, and we have only been partially successful because the Republican leadership has put up roadblock after roadblock to eliminating this most unfair tax. Now, the Republican leadership and the Rules Committee have completed a hat trick of disgrace by rejecting the Marshall amendment for consideration which would have completely ended the Disabled Veterans Tax for all disabled military retirees.

I can only hope in the future that such significant legislation as this will involve the debate and full consideration of all necessary and relevant amendments. The men and women of our Armed Forces and indeed the American people as a whole deserve as much.

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN I. SOUTHERLAND

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor John I. Southerland for his loyal service to the community.

John I. Southerland was born in Sanford, N.C. to the late Annie Bell Southerland. He

graduated from W.B. Wicker High School in 1959, then relocated to New Jersey and later to Brooklyn, N.Y. He is married to Eva Thomas Southerland and they are the proud parents of Jonathan Southerland, Stephanie Southerland-Raimier and Nydia Southerland.

In 1968, Mr. Southerland joined the New York City Police Department. During his 27 years with the department, he earned numerous commendations and certificates. He received the Certificate of Merit for 27 years of service and a Certificate of Attendance, which is given to staff members who had not been late or absent for five more years. After retiring from the Police Department in 1995, he pursued his interest in fire safety. He then received a certificate and worked as a fire safety officer in the World Trade Center until September 11. Also during the 1990's, Mr. Southerland was installed as a Deacon, by the late Rev. Dr. Paul C. Hayes, at Mercy Seat Baptist Church of Brooklyn.

In 2001, Mr. Southerland turned his attention to community advocacy. He is a member of the Executive Board of the Community Action Project (CAP), a community organization located in East Flatbush. As a board member, he has met with local politicians to lobby against fraudulent immigration services and rampant illegal truck traffic. Currently, he and the board strive to sustain the area's economic growth through better coordination of city services, specifically sanitation and police. He is also attending Queens College to broaden his understanding of political activism to better serve his community.

Mr. Southerland is an active member of local DC 37. He was chosen as a delegate to go to Albany to meet with state representative to discuss issues pertaining to the union and its members.

He continues to show commitment to the community by visiting the sick and helping senior citizens. He is always willing to share a smile and words of encouragement with everyone he meets. As a result, Mr. Speaker, today we acknowledge John I. Southerland, an asset to the community.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL CHAMPION KELLER HIGH SCHOOL GIRL'S SOFTBALL TEAM

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the teamwork and spirit of the State and National Champion Keller High School girls' softball team. These young women have established themselves as true champions among the citizens of Keller, Texas.

The Keller High Lady Indians Girls softball team recently won the State Championship in Austin, Texas, and was crowned National Champion by the USA Today National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

The Lady Indians have exhibited their commitment to each other and their common goals this past season by completing their District 5-5A schedule undefeated. Among their successes were four victories at the prestigious Tournament of Champions in Arizona. Throughout the season these outstanding women have shown the success that comes